POLITICAL COMMUNICATION
Political Science 479, Spring 2014
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-10:45am, 2280 Grainger Hall

Prof. Katherine J. Cramer
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Office: 221 North Hall, 265-3679
Office Hours: 11-noon Thursdays and by appointment
Mailbox: In the lounge across the hall from 110 North Hall. (Enter the door closest to the Lincoln statue. The lounge will be on your right. Once you enter that room, faculty mailboxes are to the left.)

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE:
Welcome to Political Communication! This course is designed to introduce you to the processes, and institutions that connect citizens and our government through communication. Its main purpose is to deepen your understanding of the uses and functions of communication in modern democracies, the dilemmas surrounding the communication of political information via mass media and other means, and the role of citizens in the broader political communication system. Ultimately, the course is intended to encourage you to think about your own orientation to the communication of information in United States democracy. The mass media will play a big role in the topics we consider, but please be aware that this course is not just about mass media. My view of political communication encompasses the way citizens communicate with each other, with their government, as well as the way political professionals (media actors, government employees, elected officials and campaign professionals) communicate with each other and with the public. We will consider the politics that generate the news we use, the way political professionals attempt to control the content of the news, the effect of this news on what we know and how we think about public affairs, the processes that take place when citizens communicate with each other, and the effect mass media have on the shape of the policies that govern us.

I highly value class discussion and interaction. I regard it as an integral part of the learning experience and learning from you is one of the joys of my job. Therefore, I expect you to attend lectures and to complete the assigned readings and assignments before attending class. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and your interpretations of the way the course material informs our understanding of current events.

REQUIREMENTS:
The course requirements are as follows. There will be two exams: a midterm and a final. These will be essay exams. There will be no make-up sessions for the final. Make your end-of-semester travel arrangements accordingly. You will also complete a term paper, two short assignments in preparation for the term paper, and several other brief assignments.

GRADING SYSTEM:
Grades will be assigned as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Final exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class assignments (graded on credit/no credit basis)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Incompletes will only be granted in highly unusual circumstances.

CLASS EMAIL LIST
The email address for our course is: polisc479-1-s14@lists.wisc.edu. I may occasionally use this for course announcements, but I will also repeat these announcements in class. You are welcome to post course-related emails to this address.

COURSE MATERIALS:
The following book is required for the course and is available at University Book Store. It is also available in the reserve room at College Library.


The other required readings that are not in this MPIP book will be available through our Desire2Learn site. (I note which ones these are in the calendar below)

TURNING IN CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:
Throughout the semester, you will have several short assignments. Please turn these in via the designated Dropbox folders on our Desire2Learn site.

END OF SEMESTER PAPER ASSIGNMENT:
Over the course of the semester, you will write a 9- to 11-page term paper. The final paper is due on Friday, May 2nd by 5pm to the designated dropbox on our Desire2Learn site. Your task is to evaluate how well existing political communication in the United States incorporates people between the ages of 18 and 25 in the political process. You will do so by focusing on a particular community. Choose a municipality (city, town, village, etc.) or other community (a college campus, the internet) to focus on—it can be Madison, your home town, or a different place or virtual community that interests you. The central question is this: Are the available means of communication between public officials and residents of this community adequate for incorporating people between the ages of 18 and 25 into politics? By “politics” I mean the policy-making process, or the process by which people in a given community govern each other. By “incorporate,” I mean engage people in political activities that you define to be important to the health of a democracy and do so in a way that increases the chances that people will engage in these activities throughout their residence in the community.

Once you have chosen a community on which to focus, you should investigate the available means of communication between public officials and residents of this community (both from public officials, to public officials, and with public officials). By “public officials,” I mean people whose job it is to create, implement, and uphold the law: elected officials, government employees, public safety officials (fire and police department employees), and judges. By what means do residents receive information? How do public officials hear from residents? How do they figure out what residents want and need? Here are some example ways of researching how well official communication incorporates young adults: researching the city or town’s web site; analyzing local media content to examine local officials’ activities; and interviewing public officials, local journalists, activists, and other members of the community that you can justify are good sources of information on this question.

As you do this research, pay particular attention to the means of communication that are available to people between the ages of 18 and 25. Keep in mind that many people in this age bracket are not college students.

High quality papers that have been written for this assignment generally look like this: After a brief introduction in which the writer introduces his or her argument, the paper explains, based on reflection on the course content, the qualities that characterize good communication between residents and public officials. Then, the paper briefly introduces the reader to the community being analyzed (location, size, and other information pertinent to your argument). Then, it describes in detail the available means of communication between public officials and residents between the ages of 18 and 25. It then carefully
analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the available means of communication in light of the criteria named earlier in the paper. Finally, the paper concludes by doing one of the following: 1) makes recommendations to the people of this community about how communication ought to be changed in order to better incorporate people between the ages of 18 and 25; 2) identifies what this community has done right in terms of political communication, and does so in a way that would make it possible for people in another location to implement these practices; 3) argues that no changes are required. As you write your paper, be sure to make use of course concepts and readings as much as possible.

In addition, you absolutely must not plagiarize. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, punishable by suspension or expulsion from the University. Plagiarism is not just turning in another person’s paper, copying a paper from the internet, or buying a paper from a term paper website. People also plagiarize when they cut and paste a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, or other chunk from another source without putting that chunk in quotation marks and citing it. Anytime a person uses someone else’s work—even if it is just a phrase—without attributing that work to the original source, it is plagiarism. If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism, please see this useful guide put together by the UW Writing Center (http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html) and/or ask me for help. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, punishable by suspension or expulsion from the university.

The final paper should be double-spaced and in 9- or 11-point type. It must use a standard method of citation, such as MLA, or Chicago style. For more information on citation, consult the guide on the Writing Center web site: http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Documentation.html.

**CALENDAR**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**T 1/21:** The role of communication in democracy

**R 1/23:** The place of news media in democracy


**T 1/28:** Continued


**II. MAKING THE NEWS**

**R 1/30:** Brief history of the government’s role in newsmaking

**T 2/4:** Access to the media, bias, and ownership

- Auferheide, “Communications Policy and the Public Interest,” MPIP, 383-394.

**ASSIGNMENT:** This assignment is intended to get you started on your term paper. In 2 double-spaced pages, identify the community you have chosen to study, your proposed methods for analyzing the quality of communication and your timetable for gathering information and completing your paper.

**R 2/6:** How political actors attempt to control media content

- Sellers, “Manipulating the Message in the U.S. Congress,” MPIP, 267-274.
III. THE EFFECT OF MASS MEDIA ON THE PUBLIC

T 2/11: The who, where and what of learning from news media


***ASSIGNMENT:*** Interview 3 friends about their news media habits. The survey to use will be distributed via Desire2Learn. Summarize your results in a paragraph and turn this in to the dropbox on Desire2Learn, but also bring your results to class this day.

R 2/13: Continued


T 2/18: Continued

Prior, “Audience Fragmentation and Political Inequality in the Post-broadcast Media Environment,” MPIP, 153-164

LOCAL PRIMARY ELECTION. Go vote if you consider Madison your place of residence! If you are not registered, you can register at the polls. See [http://www.cityofmadison.com/election/](http://www.cityofmadison.com/election/) for all the info you need to find out where to vote and how to register, and also information on the candidates.

R 2/20: Show and tell

***ASSIGNMENT:*** In one paragraph, describe the most novel form of political communication you have encountered recently. This could be a new website, a creative form of communication an elected official or candidate is using, a new form of digital communication—anything. I am looking to learn from you! I will ask for volunteers to share these things in class today.

T 2/25: Propaganda and persuasion


R 2/27: continued

T 3/4: Framing

Edy and Meirick, “Wanted, Dead or Alive: Media Frames, Frame Adoption, and Support for the War in Afghanistan,” MPIP, 141-152.

R 3/6: Agenda setting


***ASSIGNMENT:*** Pick a current events issue. Find two stories on this issue, ideally from different forms of news media. In one page or less (single-spaced), describe the way this issue is framed in each story and compare and contrast these frames.

T 3/11: IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM

R 3/13: The importance of perceptions


*****SPRING BREAK*****
T 3/25: Mass Media and elections

R 3/27: Continued
West, “Learning about the Candidates from Television Advertisements,” MIPI, 185-192.

IV. THE EFFECT OF MASS MEDIA ON POLICY
T 4/1: Domestic Policy

***ASSIGNMENT: Moving toward a final term paper. In one double-spaced page, provide a statement of the argument you are intending on making in your term paper, a brief outline of your paper, and a description of any information you still intend to gather.
LOCAL GENERAL ELECTION. Go vote! (See above under 2/18.)

R 4/3: Catch-up day

T 4/8: Foreign policy
Enterman, “Mediating the Public’s Influence on Foreign Policy,” MIPI, 315-326.

V. THE PLACE OF MASS MEDIA IN CONNECTIONS AMONG CITIZENS
R 4/10: Stereotypes and implicit priming

***ASSIGNMENT: Before class today, take the Implicit Associations Test via the University of Harvard. Go to https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/. On the left side of the page, under “Project Implicit: Social Attitudes,” continue as a guest by clicking “GO.” On the following page, click “I wish to proceed.” On the next page, scroll down and click “Race IAT” and then follow the instructions.

T 4/15: Role of media in social movements and mass mobilization

R 4/17: Effect of mass mediated and interpersonal communication on civic and political participation

VI. THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION AMONG PEOPLE
T 4/22: Informal political conversation

R 4/24: Continued

T 4/29: Deliberation
R 5/1: Continued

T 5/6: Communication in contentious contexts

R 5/8: Semester wrap-up

***************TERM PAPERS DUE FRIDAY 5/2/14***************
to the appropriate dropbox on our Desire2Learn site.

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, May 14, 2014, 2:45-4:45 pm, Room to be announced.